

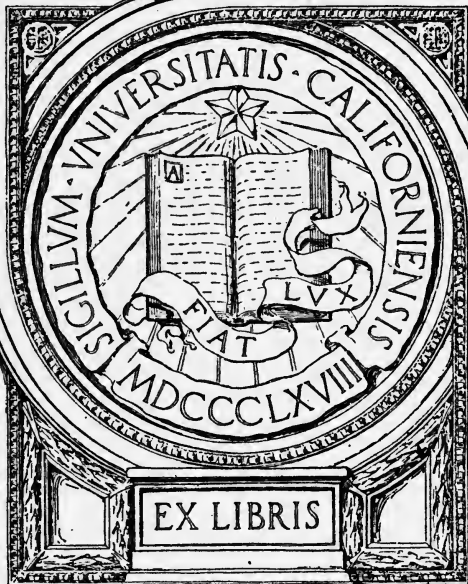
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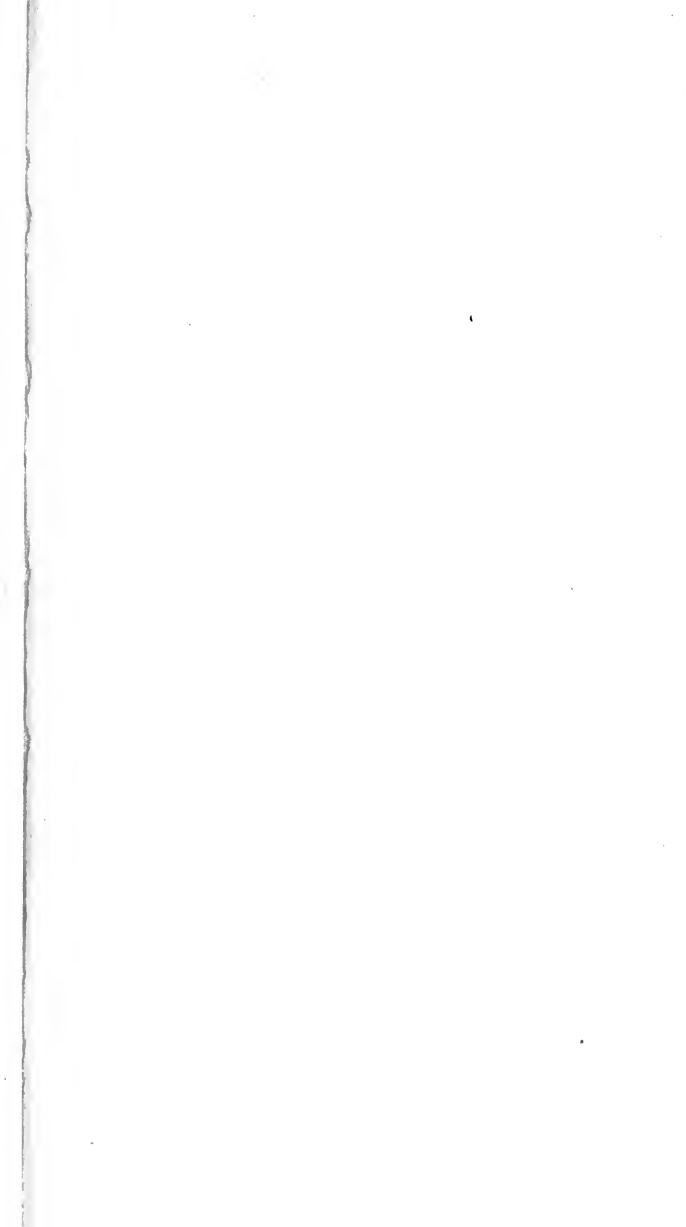
ROOM FORTY-
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W·D·HOWELLS

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Room Forty-
Five A FARCE
By W. D. Howells



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English Alumnus



Room Forty-five

FARCE

SCENE : *A room in the Summertop Hotel.*

A chambermaid is discovered putting the last touches to the bed which she has made up in an alcove. A stout gentleman appears at the door and looks in.

I

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN AND THE
CHAMBERMAID

The Stout Gentleman : "Putting anybody in here to-night, Mary? I'm just going to turn in below, and I've been out with some friends, and I guess I'm pretty tired. You all know how I am

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when I'm sleeping light ; and I'm going to sleep *hard* to-night. I'm afraid I should make it lively for anybody over me.

The Chambermaid : " Oh, that's all right, sor. There ain't annybody in by the last train but a gentleman and his wife, and the clerk's put *them* into No. 10. I'm just gettin' the room ready for a party that's comin' to-morrow morning for the day."

The Stout Gentleman : " Well, forewarned is forearmed. I thought I ought to tell you."

The Chambermaid : " All right, sor. Slape as harred as ye pl'ase. Ye won't harrum annyone here." After a final glance round the room : " Don't you worry, sir."

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The Stout Gentleman, going out:
“No. I always leave that to *them*.
Well, good-night, Mary.”

The Chambermaid: “Good-night,
sor.” She follows him out.

II

MR. AND MRS. JULIAN TRENMORE AND
THE NIGHT CLERK

Mrs. Trenmore: “Yes, this will do nicely. I don’t see why you did n’t put us here at once.” She looks about the room which the night clerk has shown her into, and sinks down upon a sofa with a deep sigh of satisfaction. Mr. Julian Trenmore, her husband, draws a fainter sigh of relief, and puts down on the table in the centre of the room his

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dress-suit case, and a bundle of shawls and umbrellas; he finally takes off his hat and places it beside them. The night clerk, who has stood near the door, burdened with a valise, two smaller handbags, a variety of wraps, a parasol, and a kodak camera, until Mrs. Trenmore shall have expressed her content with the room, now begins to place these things on the floor, and is about to retreat when her voice arrests him. "May I *ask* why you did n't put us here at once?"

The Night Clerk : "Put you here?"

Mrs. Trenmore : "Yes, put us here; give us this room in the first place, instead of the room you did give us? I should really like to know."

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The Night Clerk : “ The other room was only one flight up, and ” —

Mrs. Trenmore with vehemence : “ Right over the kitchen, where they were washing up the last dishes and singing and talking and clashing the crockery and knives ! And if we kept the windows shut the heat was suffocating, and if we opened them we simply *died* of the smell of stale bread and warm dishwater. You heard us *say* that we had come for a quiet night, and a breath of pure air, and that we wanted a cool room away from all the noises ” —

Mr. Trenmore, with spirit that does not seem constant in him : “ You heard me say so when I registered.”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ And yet you put

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us in that wretched place, where we began to swelter and stifle from the first instant, and the clatter gave me a headache that I shall not get over for a week.”

Mr. Trenmore : “ You said that No. 10 was the only room you had left.”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ And here, only one flight further up, was this delicious place, absolutely empty, and as cool and quiet as the grave ; with windows opening on a garden, and every breath of air thick with the syringas, or honeysuckles, or whatever they are. Now, *why* did n’t you do it in the first place ? ” She has risen to verify her praises of the room by examining it in every part ; she flings back the curtain of an alcove, and discloses a snowy bed. “ Oh, I

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could sleep for *ages* in that bed!" Then she advances suddenly upon the night clerk, who retires before her demand. "I should simply like to know *why* you did n't. Is it the rule of the house to keep people out of a good room if you can possibly find a bad one for them? Do you take a *pleasure* in thwarting and harassing people? When people come and tell you that they are sick with the noise and heat of New York, and that they have run out for a few nights simply to save their lives, and you see them fairly dropping dead before you, do you *like* to give them a room where a salamander could n't breathe and an adder would be stunned?"

Mr. Trenmore : "You heard me say

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so when I registered, and you told me that No. 10 was the only " —

Mrs. Trenmore, passing swiftly from the plaintive note of self-pitying appeal to the tone of withering irony: "Or do you merely prefer to wait up till the porter and call-boys have gone to bed, and then move the people yourself into something decent, when they have got perfectly desperate, and won't stand it any longer? I should like to know what your motive really is. I should like to know whether you have been following a rule of the house, or whether there is some mystery about it all that you can't explain, or whether you simply did not care to tell the truth. And after what you have made us suffer, I think I have a *right* to know."

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Mr. Trenmore : “ Yes ! Why did n’t you show us this room at once ? ”

The Night Clerk, backing into the doorway, and making good his retreat as he speaks : “ I — I — forgot this room.”

III

MR. AND MRS. TRENMORE

Mrs. Trenmore, with contemptuous incredulity : “ *Forgot !* Forgot, indeed ! This is insulting, simply insulting. He never forgot it in the world, and now to have the impudence — He was keeping it for somebody whom he could n’t impose upon with such a wretched hole as No. 10 ! He saw that he could put off anything upon *you* ! They always do. You never browbeat

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them or bully them, and so I always have to submit to any sort of — Oh, I wish *I* was a man, and had to do the registering! I don't think — Forgot this room! Call him back, Julian! I won't stand it. I can't. If he thinks that I am going to put up with any such paltry subterfuge — I'll call him myself." She plunges towards the electric button in the wall, but before she can get her finger upon it, her husband intercepts her and restrains her in a coaxing embrace.

Mr. Trenmore: "No, no, my dear! Let it go till morning and have it out with him then. We've got the room we want, and the best room in the house, and we have n't lost so very much time, after all, You did n't let

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the grass grow under your feet in No. 10 : we 're well out of it, and you 've punished that poor fellow enough. Leave him to his little mystery, or his hotel convention, or his plain lie, for the night, and make him suffer a little more in the morning."

Mrs. Trenmore : " But he won't be on duty in the morning ; we can't see him again till to-morrow night, and " —

Mr. Trenmore : " Then we 'll wait till to-morrow night, and see him. — But remember, now, that we came out for a rest, and not for a fight, though I believe you 'd rather fight than rest any time, you 're such a little bundle of pluck."

Mrs. Trenmore, half persuaded and with a touch of fondness : " Oh, if *you* had more pluck, dearest, *I* need n't have

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so *much*. You're always so mild and patient, and that makes me furious."

Mr. Trenmore : " I know it does, and I assure you I appreciate it. But " —

Mrs. Trenmore, more and more softened : " It was for your sake that I wanted to do it. When I thought how worn out with the heat you were, and how you had n't been sleeping for days and weeks almost, and then thought of the cruelty of that wretch in putting us into No. 10, when all the time he had this beautiful, big, cool, quiet room standing vacant and perfectly idle, I " —

Mr. Trenmore : " I understand, and I'm very grateful, but now I'm very sleepy, and " —

Mrs. Trenmore : " I'm not. I never was so wide awake in my life. I could

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sit up all night, just to enjoy the quietness and sweetness. I do believe it's rested me more to give that creature a piece of my mind than sleeping a month would." She goes to the window and looks out, while he drops into a chair. "Oh, this lovely garden! And this divine silence! How do you suppose we didn't see the garden from No. 10? Or was that wretch keeping *it* a secret, too, along with this room? They don't often have a garden, even in a summer hotel. There was one in that hotel at Plattsburgh, don't you remember? But the locomotives at the station under the hill seemed to be scampering up and down the garden paths the whole night. And here it's so still! You can almost hear yourself think. Dearest, if you can't

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sleep here, I don't know where you *can* sleep. Just come and see this garden, and smell it." She turns her face over her shoulder at him.

Mr. Trenmore, yawning: "In the morning, my dear. We'll take the night clerk out among the roses and rub his nose into the pinks till he gives the true reason for putting us in No. 10. But now I'd rather go to bed."

Mrs. Trenmore, returning to him: "You *are* sleepy! That's because you kept your temper. If you'd been as mad as I was — But I'm not angry, now, a bit. I'm simply bewildered. What *can* the mystery be? There must be some mystery! That fellow never forgot this room in the world. There must be something uncanny about it.

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Do you suppose it's haunted? Perhaps somebody's committed suicide in it! Do you suppose there's a back fence that will have cats on it later?"

Mr. Trenmore: "They'll have to get up early if they're going to be much later." He looks at his watch. "It's nearly one o'clock."

Mrs. Trenmore, going to the window and looking out again: "I can't see any back fence." She leans further over the window sill and peers down. "We seem to be in a kind of wing, or L, here. We're off from the main building, and there's a room just under us, but the ground floor is an open veranda. I never heard of cats coming on verandas, and I don't believe that there can be anything to disturb us. It's as still as

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still can be, now, anyway. That perfume" — she inhales it vigorously — "is from a honeysuckle that perfectly walls in one side of the veranda; you ought to see it in the moonlight; it looks as if it had been snowed on, it's so full of blossoms." While she talks, Mr. Tremore drowzes in his chair, and his head drops on his breast. "No, there's not the least danger of cats; I'm satisfied of *that*. Perhaps cat-birds; but *they* don't caterwaul, do they?" She looks round, and sees her husband asleep. "Poor Julian! I don't see how he can be sleepy, such a lovely night as this, in this exquisite room, and with this delicious garden underneath, and this silence, that fairly sings in my ears. Not a sound, anywhere! The last train must

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be in, and the station is a mile from here, anyhow, and every one of those kitchen girls has giggled herself off to bed; there is n't a cat; and" — She starts, and listens; she puts her head out and then draws it in and listens again. "Julian, what's *that*?"

Trenmore, staggering to his feet: "What's what?" He makes some vague passes through the air and tries to rouse himself.

Mrs. Trenmore, listening: "That — sound. Don't you hear it? No, there it's stopped! Did you make it?"

Trenmore: "Make what?"

Mrs. Trenmore: "The sound." Laughing, "Of course you did! You had just dropped off, and you were sno— Hark! There it is again! Then

XSS

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it *was n't* you ! Now it's stopped again. No, there it goes ! I knew I could n't be mistaken, and it can't be you, now." A low hissing noise, coming and going regularly, like the first respirations of a locomotive in starting, makes itself heard. "Don't you hear it ?"

Trenmore : "Yes, certainly, I hear it. It's nothing but the engineer trying the steam in his boilers ; they have to keep the steam going all night, in these hotels. The boilers are in the basement, and it's coming up outside."

Mrs. Trenmore : "Why, of course ! Well, it does take you to think things out, Julian ! Do you suppose he'll keep doing it long ?"

Trenmore : "I don't believe so" —

Mrs. Trenmore : "There ! He's

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SS

stopped again, already. Now, he's beginning again." She listens. "But he can't be going to keep it up long, and we mustn't mind it. *I'm* sleepy, too, and — He seems to be putting on coal, now! Does n't that sound like putting on coal?" A stertorous, broken noise is heard, and the hissing ceases. "Such queer lumps of sound! I believe I prefer the hissing. It's stopped. It's all over." S ~~X~~ Now, my dear, it's high time that — Oh, what *is* he doing?"

Trenmore, listening: "Sawing kindling-wood, I should say." Listening again: "That's it! But I don't see why he should be *planing* it. And the plane seems to catch in knots, and" — He goes to the window and puts out his head. "Everything's quiet

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outside. I thought they might be chopping ice under the window. I've been in hotels where they do it all night; but" —

Mrs. Trenmore, tragically: "It is n't coming in through the window. It's coming up through the floor!"

Trenmore: "Through the floor?"

Mrs. Trenmore: "Yes, don't you hear it?"

Trenmore: "Oh, that's merely the register, bringing the sound from the cellar."

Mrs. Trenmore: "But there is no register. I tell you it's in the room under this. Don't you hear it?"

Trenmore, listening carefully: "It does seem to be coming through the floor."

Crash [22]

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Mrs. Trenmore, sternly : “ What are they doing ? ”

Trenmore, listening and reporting with analytical conscientiousness : “ Well, they seem to be letting off steam. And — putting on coal. And — sawing kindling. And — planing it. And — catching the plane in knots. And — chopping ice. And — now, they ’re emptying out potatoes on the floor. And — making hooks and hunks of noise. And — choking, and catching their breath, and ” —

Mrs. Trenmore : “ They ’re killing somebody ! I tell you they are ; and we shall both be subpœnaed and cross-examined, and I don’t know *what* all. Go down and — There, it ’s stopped again ; it ’s all perfectly silent ; they ’re

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every one of them dead!" The noises slowly renew themselves in all their strange variety. "There! They're beginning to struggle again. Oh, Julian, if you have any love for me at all, you will go — No, I can't let you! They will murder you too. But call — call that wretched night clerk, and make *him* go. I'll ring —" She whirls away to press the bell button, but he catches her by the wrist, and pulls her over towards the floor with him where he stoops listening.

Trenmore: "It is n't murder — It's.. something much worse — It's — Don't you hear? Listen!" She stoops and listens with him; then she lifts herself and faces him.

Mrs. Trenmore: "You don't mean

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to tell me that it's some one — *snoring*?" He nods solemnly. "Julian, I can't believe it! ~~That any human being~~ is making those horrible sheets and spurts, and chips, and shavings, and lumps, and hooks, and bounces of noise in his *sleep*?" He nods as before. "Well, then, I can tell you it's nothing of the kind. It's not snoring; it's murder! It's" — She listens again, stooping lower with her ear toward the floor, and then facing him with awful calm: "I do believe it is — what you ~~say~~. And now, what are you going to do about it?"

Trenmore, in a ghostly whisper: "I don't see what we can do, exactly. I suppose we shall have to wait till he stops."

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Mrs. Trenmore: “And suppose he does n’t stop? Suppose he *never* stops?”

Trenmore shrugs. “Don’t tell me you’re not going to do anything! That you’re going to submit — that you’re going to lie down passively under the worst snoring that there ever was! Then *I’m* not!

We shan’t get a wink of sleep the whole night. It’s an outrage, and I won’t endure it! I’m going to ring for that” —

She makes another dash at the bell button, and he intercepts her again; the noises continue in their complexity.

“Let me go, Julian! *Now*, I understand why he was so loath to give us this room, and I shall let him know what we think of his putting us” —

Trenmore: “We don’t want to make a scene, my dear. We don’t want to

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be ridiculous. Let us think whether we can't do something ourselves to stop it." They both stand silent and motionless, trying to think ; the noises continue as before. "If there was only a register we might call down through it."

Mrs. Trenmore : "But there *is* no register. I told you there was no register in the beginning. Indeed, if there was a register, don't you suppose I would bang on it till he was *glad* to stop? Go down and knock on his door!"

Trenmore : "Do you think that would do? I'm afraid it might rouse the house. I might go to the wrong door — the noise seems to come from everywhere, now, and what — what" —

Mrs. Trenmore, impatiently : "Well, what?"

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Trenmore : “ What if it was a lady ? ”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ Nonsense ! No woman in the world could make such a noise as that. I tell you it’s a man, and you’re perfectly safe.”

Trenmore, dubiously : “ I don’t know about the safety. If it’s a woman it would be scandalous, and if it’s a man it might be dangerous. He might come to the door to ask what I wanted, and then what could I say ? You can’t tell a man that he’s been snoring, and you’ve waked him. And if it was a woman came to the door — I’ve heard them on the sleeping-cars sometimes, and if it *should* happen to be a woman — think of the talk ! No, my dear, it won’t do.”

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Mrs. Trenmore : "Then we must thump on the floor !"

Trenmore : "Thump on the floor ? Oh, I don't know ! ~~That's~~ rather serious. I rather think we'll have to have patience. He can't keep it up *all* night ; he must wake himself by and by. Let's wait a while longer. I don't believe we've any right to thump on the floor."

Mrs. Trenmore : "Right or wrong, I'm going to do it. Has *he* any right to keep on making noises that raise the roof and shake the whole house, and we not lift a hand against it ? Give me those umbrellas !" She makes a dash for the umbrellas on the table, but he interposes.

Trenmore : "But if it *should* be a woman" —

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Mrs. Trenmore “Oh, I wish it *was* a woman. Horrid thing! Will you let me have those umbrellas, Julian, or do you wish me to go home to mamma? What a shame to treat your own wife so! You care more for some horrible, vulgar, common creature, that destroys the peace and comfort of a whole hotel with her puffing and” — She slips round behind him, and seizes the umbrellas. “There! Now, I’ll see if I can’t do something to stop her making a perfect hippopotamus of herself.”

Trenmore: “But I don’t say she *is* a woman, my dear!”

Mrs. Trenmore: “No matter. I don’t care whether she’s a woman or a man. If I can only find the place

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right over his head, I shall thump so that she'll be glad to" — She goes about listening at different points in the room, and trying to locate the noises, bending over, and putting her ear to the floor; he follows her, adapting himself to her movements in vain entreaty of posture and gesture.

Trenmore: "Don't do it, my dear; don't do it! Consider the uproar it's going to make! We shall have people running in from all over the house asking what's the matter. It isn't *done*, my love! It *can't* be done. We're in a public house, and we have no right to make a noise and wake everybody up. They can arrest us, I believe. Don't, darling! Do have a little patience. He'll soon wake, I know he will!"

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Mrs. Trenmore, unheeding: "The sound seems to be everywhere. Oh, how cruel, Julian, to leave it all to me!" She rises and glares reproachfully at him. "Help me to find the place right over the dreadful thing's head. / She ought to be ashamed!"

Trenmore: "But if she's a man, he'll make an awful row at being waked. Very likely he'll come up here and" —

Mrs. Trenmore: "Oh, I should just like to *have* her." She goes about as before, stooping and listening. "I believe I've got the place now." She stoops lower and listens. "Yes, this is it. He's right under it, and no thanks to *you*, Julian. And now I shall thump" —

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Trenmore: “But, consider, my dear!”

Mrs. Trenmore, desperately: “I shall *not* consider. I have a right to save my own life; and — Will you lift the rug, here, Julian, or must I do everything? Oh, very well then; I’ll lift it.”

Trenmore, reluctantly lifting the rug: “I’ll do it, my dear; (but — but — thump softly.”)

Mrs. Trenmore: “Thump softly! Snore softly!” She raises the umbrella and brings the point down with all her force. “There! I think that she’ll hear that, unless she’s dead, and I know she is n’t dead.” She batters furiously with the umbrella, which goes to pieces

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in her hands. "Give me another umbrella, Julian."

Trenmore : "But had n't you better wait and see, my dear, if he won't" —

Mrs. Trenmore, snatching the other umbrella from the table, and returning to her work: "It has n't made the slightest impression on her." She beats and thumps on the floor till the second umbrella gives way; she flings the fragments from her. "Oh, if I only had a poker!" She glares around the room. — "But of course in a summer hotel, like this, there's no fireplace, and no poker nearer than the kitchen. Why did n't you think to bring your cane?"

Trenmore, soothingly: "It would n't have done any good, my dear. If umbrellas won't wake him, canes" —

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Mrs. Trenmore: "Then give me my parasol!"

Trenmore: "But your parasol could n't bear it a moment!"

Mrs. Trenmore, seizing it: "No matter. *I* can't either. There!" She dispatches the parasol with a single blow, flings the fragments from her, and turns to her husband. "Bring your dress-suit case! It's good and hard, and" —

Trenmore: "But, my dear! I don't want to thump the floor with my dress-suit case. I" —

Mrs. Trenmore, with frenzy: "You want me to do it? Very well, then, I will." She reaches for the dress-suit case, but he puts it behind him.

Trenmore: "There! I'll do it."

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Where is the place? You've ruined the floor!"

Mrs. Trenmore: "No matter about the floor. Thump." Trenmore blindly obeys. "Now, that is something *like* thumping. If that won't wake her, nothing will. And if you had thought of your dress-suit case in the first place, I need n't have destroyed our two umbrellas and my Paris parasol. But, no! *I* have to think of everything. Thump with the corner!" After half a dozen blows with the corner of the case, it springs open, and the dress suit, with a shirt, collars, cuffs, ties, and handkerchiefs flies out over the floor. "That comes of your not locking it! But never mind the things, now. I never wanted you to bring them, and I told

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you so ; but you always will, even if you don't expect to meet a soul you know. Thump!" She sinks panting into a chair.

Trenmore, erecting himself and standing with the open empty case in his hand, listening: "No. He's stopped."

Mrs. Trenmore: "Listen! I do believe we have stopped her. I knew we could do it. Oh, we have! What a rest! How deliciously silent! Oh, Julian, I never can be grateful enough to you." He looks round at his scattered garments. "I'll pick them up for you, as soon as can I get my breath."

Trenmore: "I wish you'd get *my* breath, too, while you're at it." He sinks panting into a chair. "And look

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at my dress-suit case !” He gazes ruefully down at the ruin.

Mrs. Trenmore : “Don’t mind it, dearest. I’ll get you a new one for your birthday. I’ve been saving up the money I’ve got from you, and I did n’t know what I *should* get you, and now it’s a perfect inspiration. Oh, how quiet it is ! Does n’t it seem too good to be true, dearest ? Now, won’t you always trust my judgment after this, a little ? I know that I’m impetuous at times, and I do take the whip hand and the bit in my teeth, now and then, but only when it’s absolutely necessary. Better put down the window, dear. We’re both overheated, and we ought to keep out of the draft till we cool off. Oh, *what* a rest ! I really had begun to

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despair; and it *has* cost us something. Your umbrella is ruined, and so is mine; and my parasol is a *perfect* wreck; and I suppose the floor — But if it's a man we can make *him* pay for the floor, can't we? Or we can just pull back the rug over it. No? Well, I know how sensitive you are about such things, and I merely suggested it; I'm sure *I* don't want to do anything wrong about it, if you don't. / Oh, I'm so *happy*! I'm not the least sleepy any more; I feel as if I could stay up all night and enjoy the quiet more and more, every minute. Oh, how still it is! Can't you fairly *hear* the stillness?" Trenmore lifts his head and stands in a listening attitude. "What is it?"

Trenmore: "Nothing. I" —

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Mrs. Trenmore : “ You what ? ”

Trenmore : “ Nothing. But I — did n’t you — *hear* something ? ”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ Only the singing of the silence in my ears.”

Trenmore : “ Yes, it must be that. But — did n’t it begin that way before ? ”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ *It* ? Oh, Julian, you don’t ” —

Trenmore : “ No, no ! It’s stopped. It was the si— ” A low, hissing noise makes itself heard. It deepens, and passes into the effect of escaping steam. It becomes like the respiration of a locomotive in starting. It changes into the sound of stoking an engine. It changes again into the sound of sawing wood, of planing knotty lumber, of

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chopping ice, of pouring out potatoes, and ends in lumps and hooks and bounces of sound. Trenmore turns a ghastly face upon his wife ; she hides her face in her hands and bursts into tears. “ I suppose he merely turned over and got a new grip.”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ Oh, dear, oh, dear ! What shall we do now, Julian ? ”

Trenmore : “ Shall I thump again ? ”

Mrs. Trenmore : “ It would n't be any use. She'd just turn over again and get *another* new grip. Oh, I *know* it's a woman, now, and she's doing it to spite us because we woke her. I shall die ; yes, I shall die ! Oh, who could have dreamt of such an awful thing ? Did you ever hear anything like it before ? Now *say* if you did ? ” She

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stretches her hands piteously toward him.

Trenmore : “ Never ! not even on a sleeping - car, and I ’ve listened to a whole car-load of drummers before now.” Suddenly : “ But I ’m not going to stand it ! ” He dashes his empty dress-suit case wildly to the floor, and jumps up and down on the bare space, while she weeps silently. “ I ’m getting a little mad myself now.” The noises below continue unaffected by his activities, and he flies at the electric bell button. “ I ’m going to have that scoundrelly clerk up ! I am going to know why he puts two unoffending strangers into the loft of a boiler factory. I am going to make him send the proprietor. I am going to have the police. I am going

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to rouse the house. I am going to raise the roof." He strides furiously up and down, kicking the broken umbrellas and shirts and collars out of his way. He stops abruptly and invokes the unconscious sleeper beneath. "Oh, blow away, you old grampus! Your time is short! Get in your work; let off your steam, put on your coal, saw your kindling, plane your boards, chop your ice, pour out your potatoes, make your hooks and hunks!"

Mrs. Trenmore, clasping her hands in admiration: "Oh, dearest you *are* mad, are n't you? How sweet it is of you! But Julian, could n't you — I know it's against your principles, and you never have; but just for my sake — swear?"

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IV

THE NIGHT CLERK, MR. AND MRS. TREN-
MORE

The Night Clerk, tapping on the door jamb, and extending a pitcher through the open doorway: "Ice-water?"

Trenmore: "Ice what?"

The Night Clerk: "Water. You rang three times."

Trenmore: "Did I? Then I meant to ring three *hundred* times. What did you mean by putting us in here?"

The Night Clerk: "You did n't like No. 10, and I changed you to the only room we had. Ain't you comfortable?"

Trenmore: "Comf—! Do you hear

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that? Don't pretend you *don't* hear it? I won't stand it!" He seizes the clerk by the arm and pulls him over, so as to bring his head close to the floor. "*Now* do you hear it?"

The Night Clerk, rising, as *Trenmore* releases him: "If you say so. Yes, sir, I think I did hear a noise of some kind."

Trenmore: "Oh, you did! And what do you think it is?"

The Night Clerk: "Well, sir, it's no use trying to disguise it, I suppose. It's the gentleman in Room 45, right under you here. That's the way he always does."

Trenmore, choking with rage: "And you put us in here, over a man that *always* does like that? Now, see here!

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You just go down to Room 45, and wake that man up, and tell him ” —

Mrs. Trenmore : “ I knew it *could n't* be a *woman*. No woman could be so lost to shame.”

Trenmore, harshly; “ Never mind about that now.” To the clerk : “ You go down ” —

The Night Clerk : “ Oh, I *could n't* do that. I would *n't* have the right to call up any guest that way.”

Trenmore : “ No right to call up a porpoise ” —

The Night Clerk : “ No, sir. Not if he was a guest. And especially No. 45. You see it's like this. He's here for the summer, and he told us fair and square, when he came, that he had this — habit; and we arranged to put him

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off here in the L, with nobody under him, and only this one room over him — you must have noticed that we came here through a sort of gallery ; and he 's really hired the whole wing, as you may say ” —

Trenmore : “ And you mean to tell me that we 're *trespassing* on a locomotive, wood-sawing, ice-chopping, potato-pouring stoker like that ? ”

The Night Clerk : “ No, sir, not exactly ; we can use this room at our own risk, and we do use it under certain conditions, when there 's no other vacant. You see, there is n't much danger, if we can get a transient in here, and get him asleep before No. 45 comes in. Then the transient sleeps through, and No. 45 does n't disturb him. But sometimes

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we do get stuck. Now, to-night, for instance: when I put you in here, I supposed 45 was out, and would n't be in for an hour, and that would give you plenty of time to get in ahead of him, but he must have stolen a march on me. I don't blame you for being mad; I should be just so myself, but it was n't my fault. I did the best I could, and I had to take the chances with you." He listens and adds, sociably: "He's in great form, to-night, ain't he? Whole band, as you may say. Notice how he gets in that trombone tremolo every now and then? It's grand—in its way, I mean." The clerk sits down and listens with an air of critical appreciation. "Oh, he's an orchestra, and no mistake! *I* never heard any-

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thing like it. Whole Wagner opera, ain't he?" He appeals for sympathy to Mrs. Trenmore, but failing, addresses himself to Trenmore. "Well, sir, you won't hardly believe it, but there ain't anything I like better, when the house is all settled down, than to take my cigar and get into a good easy-chair on the veranda under him, and just *listen*. No danger of my dropping off to sleep and missing a bell! No, sir. *He* looks after that. It's the variety that does it — that keeps you interested." He listens: "There's a kind of a *vox humana* stop that he gets in, now and then, after he's been dining pretty well, that beats everything. I wish he would just try it once so you could hear it." He listens: "No, that ain't it;

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that's his æolian harp attachment. Some nights I've heard him do a symphony; kind of soft and low, to begin with, like the wind in the leaves, and shepherds dancing; then drums in the distance, and cannon firing; then the tramp of soldiers, and army wagons creaking and horses neighing; then musket-firing along the whole line, and peasants running off and women crying. That usually wakes him up, and he turns over for a fresh start." He listens: "I don't know as I ever heard him get in more style than he is doing to-night. Kind of a diapason, ain't it? Notice those high notes? And that bass? Oh, it's rich! He must have been out with the boys, somewhere, to-night. What a *swing* he's got to him!

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Like the wedding march in ‘Lohengrin,’ ain’t it? There! By George, he’s stopped, and I thought he was just coming to that passage in the Intermezzo; I was keeping it for a kind of surprise for you. He is such an undependable fellow, though. Never twice alike. He’s so quiet you’d think he was dead now, wouldn’t you?” He listens with a rapt air.

Trenmore, grimly: “Do you suppose he is dead? That he’s stopped for good?”

The Night Clerk, shaking his head: “I wouldn’t like to trust him. He may begin in another minute, or he may take a rest—like when the orchestra goes out for beer, you know—and you won’t hear from him for a

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quarter of an hour, may be. But he's uncertain."

Trenmore: "And what do you propose to do with us?"

The Night Clerk: "Well, sir, I'm sorry, but there isn't anything else except No. 10. I guess that's all quiet now; in fact, I know it is; and I've had it airing" —

Trenmore: "Oh, then, you expected we should have to go back, did you?"

The Night Clerk: "Not exactly. But I thought, in case anything happened — If he gets in his work first, they generally want to move."

Mrs. Trenmore: "Well, it's a wicked imposition, and I'm not going to stand it. I'm going to stay here. Does he never stop for good?"

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The Night Clerk: "He does sometimes; or as good as for good. He wakes himself up so that he can't sleep, and then he turns out and smokes a cigar, and that gives you a chance to drop off. He *may* have done it now. You can never tell; and if he *has* happened to have got up and started in for a smoke, why, you may drop off, you know, and make out a splendid night's rest yet. Guess you're so tired he would n't wake you, if you hurried. But, as I say, it's all a chance."

Mrs. Trenmore: "Then we will take the chance, Julian. I am not going to be driven back to that noisy, pantry-smelling — Oh, he's beginning again!" She sinks into her chair with a desolate wail, and hides her face in her hands.

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The Night Clerk, sadly, while the noises successively make themselves heard in all their variety: "I was afraid of it. You see, if he's been dining more than usual, he can't quite wake himself; he makes a strike for it, and that gives you the idea that he *has* done it. But" — He shakes his head compassionately. "I can understand just how the lady feels, and I'm sorry" —

V

MRS. TRENMORE

Mrs. Trenmore, springing to her feet, and confronting him: "Then *do* something! Julian, go with him, and see if it's quiet in No. 10, and see if it's cool;

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and if it is — No, don't take your things! You can come back for them, if it's all right, and then I can come." Trenmore and the night clerk fly at her command, and she remains alone amid the sounds from below. At first she is absorbed in the interest of her husband's quest; then she becomes aware of the sounds. "Oh, yes, keep on, you heartless, shameless thing! Puff away, you cruel wretch! I wonder what you look like, anyway! I should just like to see what sort of fiend in human shape you really are! Keep on, do!" She stamps on the bare floor above the sleeper's head, while he steadily works away from locomotive fizzing to wood-sawing, ice-chopping, and potato-rolling. "Some great, disgusting, bulbous, blubbery

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thing, with cheeks hanging down, and a red fat neck, and pudgy hands — oh, *I* know what you look like ! And I hate you, hate you, hate you ! If you had a spark of humanity, or the least remorse, or any gallantry at all, you'd *stop*. But you just take a pleasure in driving a helpless woman from her room, great oaf !” She begins to gather up the broken umbrellas and to put Trenmore's things back into his dress-suit case, whimpering : “ You've made me break our two silk paragon frame umbrellas, that cost five dollars apiece, and my parasol that I brought from Paris ; but much *you* care, you big, ugly — *I* don't know what ! And Julian's dress-suit case is perfectly ruined, and we shall have to pay for the floor over your head,

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you hideous monster. Oh, rumble and puff and whistle away! If you had any self-respect — But I don't care what you do now. I'm going to get away from you, and you can't spoil my rest any more. I just like to listen to you and despise you; I take a pleasure in it; and I hope you'll go on snorting and wheezing to your heart's content. It doesn't matter to me, now; I'm safe. Keep on, and show how gross and vulgar you are! I just like to laugh at you. Ha, ha, ha! I only wish you knew I was listening to you. Oh, go on; go on! I shall leave you now and wait outside; you can have the place to yourself." She goes out, and instantly returns. "But don't suppose I'm going to leave you sweetly sleeping." She takes up

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the water-pitcher, and smashes it on the floor. "There! I guess that will make you turn over." She goes and returns again, to follow the pitcher with the bowl. "And that, too." She goes out, and returns to break a chair on the place. "See how you like that, for a change." She drags the washstand from the wall and bumps it up and down. "And that, and that, and that! Oh, it has n't troubled him a bit! I surely shall go mad, if this keeps on! Yes — Julian, Julian! Come back and save me! Where *are* you, Ju—"

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VI

TRENMORE, THE NIGHT CLERK, MRS.
TRENMORE

Trenmore, returning with the night clerk: "It's all right, my dear. No. 10 is as cool as a cucumber and as sweet as a pink."

Mrs. Trenmore, frantically: "Oh, I don't care *what* it is! If they were washing all the dishes in the world under it, and it was as hot and stuffy and smelly as — as — the pantry of a steamer, I'd go. Only take me out of this! My spirit is broken." She falls upon his shoulder and he slowly trails her from the room, while the night clerk gathers up their baggage and pre-

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pares to follow them, with a cursory glance at the wreckage.

VII

THE NIGHT CLERK AND THE STOUT GENTLEMAN

The Night Clerk : “She got in some good work, but she could n’t disturb *him*. Oh, he’s a bird! Hullo!” The stout gentleman appears at the door in a varied deshabille of pajama jacket and black trousers; he wears a silk hat.

The Stout Gentleman : “What’s been going on here?”

The Night Clerk : “Going on? Oh, nothing! Did you hear anything?”

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The Stout Gentleman : “ I heard a cat-fight, or a cyclone ! ”

The Night Clerk : “ Ha, ha, ha ! Oh, no ; oh, no ! You must have been dreaming. Sorry you waked yourself up.”

The Stout Gentleman : “ I have n’t been to sleep yet. But now, look here ! I’ve been out with some friends to-night, and you know how I am. Better not put anybody in here. I should make it lively for them.”

The Clerk, following him to the door : “ Oh, I shan’t put anybody in here. Don’t be afraid of *that* ! And I hope you won’t hear any more cyclones or cat-fights — ah, ha, ha ! Good-night, good-night, sir ! ”

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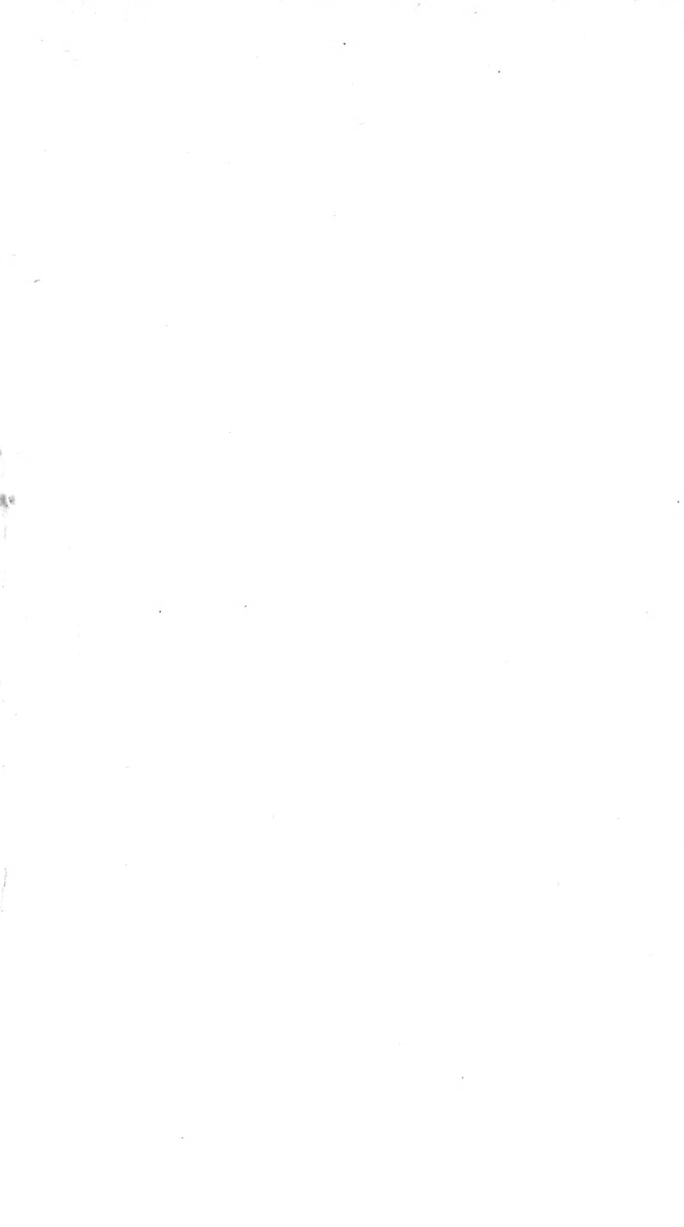
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